

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 25583

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, FR

SUBJECT: BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION ON ANTOINE RUFFENACHT,
NEWLY-APPOINTED STATE SECRETARY ATTACHED TO THE
PRIME MINISTER

REF: PARIS 25052

1. ANTOINE RUFFENACHT ENTERS THE BARRE CABINET, AT 38 YEARS OF AGE, AS THE JUNIOR MEMBER. BORN OF AN OLD MERCHANT FAMILY IN LE HAVRE, WHICH HAD EMIGRATED FROM NORTHEASTERN FRANCE, RUFFENACHT STUDIED AT THE FACULTY OF LAW AND THE INSTITUTE OF POLITICAL STUDIES BEFORE ENTERING ENA IN 1966. UPON GRADUATION FROM THAT PRESTIGIOUS SCHOOL TWO YEARS LATER, HE BEGAN HIS CAREER IN THE MINISTRY OF ECONOMY AND FINANCE. WHEN OLIVIER GUICHARD, JUST NAMED MINISTER OF JUSTICE, BECAME MINISTER OF EDUCATION IN JUNE 1969, RUFFENACHT ENTERED HIS CABINET AS A TECHNICAL ADVISOR AND FOLLOWED GUICHARD THREE YEARS LATER INTO HIS NEW ASSIGNMENT AS MINISTER FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT, EQUIPMENT, HOUSING AND TOURISM. HE WAS ALREADY A UDR MILITANT, THE "SUPPLEANT" (REPLACEMENT) OF MAURICE
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GEORGES, THEN UDR DEPUTY FROM THE SEINE-MARITIME. WHEN

GEORGES RESIGNED FOR HEALTH REASONS IN JUNE 1975, RUFFEN-
ACHT RAN IN THE LEGISLATIVE BY-ELECTION IN LE HAVRE, A
STRONGHOLD OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY,
AND WITH THE DIRECT ASSISTANCE OF FORMER PRIME MINISTER
CHIRAC AND OTHER UDR BIG GUNS, ROUNDLY WHIPPED DANIEL
COLLIARD, HIS COMMUNIST OPPONENT AND CURRENT ASSISTANT
MAYOR OF THAT CITY. WHEN YVES GUENA TOOK OVER AS SECRE-
TARY GENERAL OF THE UDR IN APRIL 1976, RUFFENACHT,
ALREADY KNOWN FOR HIS SHARP POLITICAL NOSE, WAS APPOINTED
ASSISTANT SECRETARY GENERAL IN CHARGE OF ELECTIONS. THE
EXPRESS PURPOSE OF HIS ASSIGNMENT WAS TO PREPARE THE
PARTY FOR THE 1977 MUNICIPAL AND 1978 LEGISLATIVE ELEC-
TIONS. RUFFENACHT HAS OPENLY DECLARED HIS INTENTION OF
RUNNING IN NEXT YEAR'S MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS AGAINST
INCUMBENT COMMUNIST MAYOR OF LE HAVRE ANDRE DUROMEA, A
COURAGEOUS AMBITION ON HIS PART IN VIEW OF LOCAL COMMU-
NIST STRENGTH. HE IS ALREADY RECONCILED TO THE FACT THAT
HE WILL PROBABLY LOSE.

2. IN PRIVATE BUSINESS RUFFENACHT IS ALSO ACTIVE AS
PRESIDENT OF THE SOCIETE INTEROCEANIQUE. HE BELONGS TO
THE PROTESTANT ESTABLISHMENT AND HAS TIES WITH SUCH
LEADING BUSINESS FAMILIES AS THE -
BAUMGARTNERS AND THIERRY-MEIGS. HE WAS NOMINATED FOR A
LEADER GRANTEE IN MAY OF THIS YEAR, BUT TO DATE HAS BEEN
UNABLE TO GO TO THE U.S. NEVERTHELESS RUFFENACHT, WELL
KNOWN TO EMBASSY OFFICIALS, PASSED SIX MONTHS IN THE U.S.
SOME YEARS AGO AT THE INVITATION OF THE LA FAYETTE FOUND-
ATION IN BOSTON. THE PURPOSE OF HIS TRIP WAS APPARENTLY
TO MEET AMERICANS AND LEARN ABOUT THE U.S. RUFFENACHT
SPEAKS ENGLISH FAIRLY WELL. HE IS MARRIED TO A WOMAN
FROM AN OLD LYON FAMILY AND HAS TWO CHILDREN; IN PERSONAL
CONTACT HE IS OPEN, SOMETIMES TO THE POINT OF INDISCRE-
TION. HE IS ALSO A VOLUBLE OBSERVER OF THE INTERNAL
FRENCH POLITICAL SCENE. IN HIS CURRENT POST HE HAS BEEN
ASSIGNED THE SPECIFIC TASK OF PREPARING THE MAJORITY FOR
FORTHCOMING ELECTIONS AND, IN VIEW OF HIS WELL REVEALED
TALENTS AS A GOOD NAVIGATOR IN ELECTORAL WATERS, WE
EXPECT THAT HIS VIEWS ON MAJORITY ELECTORAL TACTICS WILL
RECEIVE THE CAREFUL ATTENTION OF THE PRIME MINISTER AND
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THE PRESIDENT. ONE OF CHIRAC'S FAIR-HAIRED BOYS, RUFFEN-
ACHT, WHO MET WITH AN EMBASSY OFFICIAL ONLY HOURS AFTER
THE FORMER PRIME MINISTER'S RESIGNATION, WAS ADAMANT IN
INSISTING THAT THE PRESS HAD MADE MORE OF CHIRAC'S
WRATH THAN WAS MERITED. HE FEELS HIS MENTOR WILL BE BACK
IN THE POLITICAL LIMELIGHT BEFORE TOO LONG A TIME HAS
ELAPSED, BUT ALSO HASTENED TO ASSURE US THAT THE UDR
WOULD SIT TIGHT IN THE MAJORITY AND FOLLOW, WITH AS E

LITTLE GROWLING AS POSSIBLE, THE POLICIES OF THE NEW
PRIME MINISTER.
RUSH

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